

MARC Riders Advisory Council Meeting

12 January 2017

4:30 pm – 6:00 pm

Hall of States, Room 383

Summary minutes

- I. Call meeting to order (Steve Chan, Chairman): Called to order at 4:33
- II. Introductions (Steve Chan)
- III. Review of November minutes
- IV. Review of November and December performance and ridership data (Donna Walsh, Chief Customer Communications Officer, MARC Train Service)
 - a. On-time performance (OTP) data have slight differences between the table view and the OTP summary page
 - i. The table is automatically generated, while the summary page is typed by hand
 - ii. For the Penn Line, the table includes both weekday and weekend data, while the summary page separates the two services
 - b. Starting with the January data, the ridership pages will include year-over-year changes
- V. Inauguration service (Dave “DJ” Johnson, MARC Assistant Chief Transportation Officer)
 - a. Penn Line (Baltimore -> DC only) and Brunswick Line service only
 - b. Tickets
 - i. Commemorative tickets are available: \$20 from Maryland stations, \$30 from West Virginia stations
 - ii. Regular tickets and monthly/weekly passes will be honored
 - iii. Last day for online commemorative ticket sales was 11 January. Tickets will be available through Inauguration Day at the CommuterDirect locations (Odenton and Frederick)
 - iv. About 350 commemorative tickets have been sold so far
 - c. Service
 - i. Penn Line: 8 southbound trains in the morning, 10 northbound trains in the afternoon/evening
 - ii. Brunswick Line: 2 Martinsburg and 2 Frederick trains in both the morning and afternoon/evening
 - iii. Using 6 trainsets on the Penn Line – first two trains will deadhead back to Baltimore Penn for later trips
 - iv. Trains will not stop at New Carrollton, Seabrook, Bowie State, Rockville, Garrett Park, Kensington, or Silver Spring.
 - d. Why no reverse peak service?
 - i. Focus is on Inauguration
 - ii. Not enough trains to provide enough service for Inauguration Day crowds as well as regular commuters
 - iii. Deadheading trains need to express back to Baltimore Penn to get there in time – they can’t get there fast enough if they stop at intermediate stations
 - iv. Refunds for riders unable to take MARC due to no reverse peak service?
 - 1. No, “monthly tickets are not pro-rated”

- e. Event at Union Station on Thursday
 - i. Can't provide many details due to security concerns
 - ii. Approximately 3/4 of the station will be closed
 - 1. The ONLY access to the station will be via the northern Metro entrance on 1st Street NE
 - 2. The entrance next to H&M, Au Bon Pain, etc will be closed
 - iii. "Wednesday evening and all day Thursday is going to be interesting" – Dave Johnson
- VI. Review of 'R' schedule ridership and Brunswick Line 'R' schedule concerns (Dave Johnson)
 - a. Now have 2 years of service on "minor" federal holidays
 - b. MARC has provided a report on ridership numbers
 - c. Planned holiday schedules for 2017:
 - i. MLK Day – 'R' schedule
 - ii. Washington's Birthday – 'R' schedule
 - iii. July 4 – Don't know yet
 - iv. Columbus Day – 'R' schedule
 - v. Veterans Day – 'R' schedule
 - vi. Day after Thanksgiving – Don't know yet
 - vii. Day after Christmas – Don't know yet
 - viii. Day after New Year's – Don't know yet
 - d. Still looking at which specific trains will be run – will make decisions after Washington's Birthday
 - e. Suggestion from the council: considering running trains on Memorial and Labor Day
 - i. MARC will consider this, but it will be more expensive to run service on those days due to employees receiving holiday pay
 - f. Day after Christmas 2016 and Day after New Year's 2017 were on the observed federal holidays, which could account for the significantly reduced ridership compared to average daily ridership (12-15% on Penn Line, 1-2% on Camden Line, and 1% on Brunswick Line)
- VII. Bike racks (Dean DelPeschio, Chief Mechanical Officer, MARC Train Service)
 - a. MARC is moving forward with a plan to have full-sized bike racks in all trailer cars (i.e. cars without a restroom)
 - i. There will be 2 bike racks per car, replacing 4 seats, and the modifications will be done in-house
 - 1. These are extensive modifications – they will take 2-3 days per car
 - 2. There will be some sort of indicator on the outside of the car
 - a. One possibility is two blue lights, with a lit light indicating an available bike rack – passengers will be able to locate a bike rack as the train is arriving
 - ii. The first phase will be to have racks in 1/3 of the trailer cars (~30 of 88)
 - iii. The official announcement will not be made until enough cars are in service to ensure that all trains have at least one car with bike racks
 - iv. MARC is still trying to determine the policies for use. For example:
 - 1. What if a passenger has a bike but all the bike racks are in use?

- 2. How will bikes be brought onto the train at low-level platforms?
 - a. The current bike cars have decals on the steps demonstrating how to carry a bike on steps. Something similar might be used in this case.
 - 3. Until enough cars have been modified to reach saturation, can the bike racks be used?
 - v. Each train will have at least 1 car with bike racks (and Penn Line trains will likely have 2 cars with them)
 - vi. Suggestion from the council: Focus on providing these cars on specific trains first, rather than spreading them evenly throughout the fleet?
 - vii. Suggestion from the council: Release some sort of pre-announcement, saying that this effort is underway and will be fully rolled out in __ months
- VIII. New system maps (Dave Johnson)
 - a. Two different maps:
 - i. Line map ("subway map") for in the trains themselves
 - 1. Single level cars will have the maps at the ends of the cars
 - 2. Bilevel cars will have them on the middle level
 - ii. System map for at stations (and presumably schedules)
- IX. Old business
 - a. Status of station signage on Brunswick Line?
 - i. Signs are currently being installed on the Camden Line
 - ii. Brunswick Line is coming next
 - b. Total fleet size: 177 cars total, 128 needed for normal operations
 - i. 26 MARC IIA, 34 MARC IIB cars
 - c. Messaging on MARC IV (8000-series) cars
 - i. LED signs require all cars to be MARC IVs
 - ii. Some cars may have had an older software version, which could have caused problems with messages
 - 1. All cars should be updated to the latest version, so that issue should be fixed
 - iii. Audio announcements: can they be changed to "arriving at STATION", instead of "stopping at STATION"?
 - 1. Might be possible - messages were recorded by "the voice of MTA" –
 - a. If he recorded the word "arriving", MARC should be able to modify the messages to make this change
 - d. Need to communicate which doors will be opened at stations
 - e. Gate C passenger flow issues
 - i. In the morning at Union Station, arriving passengers frequently enter the station through Gate C (one of the MARC boarding gates), rather than Gate A, causing significant interference for passengers waiting to board their trains
 - ii. MARC has been trying to resolve this for several years
 - iii. Mike Tierney (Amtrak) will investigate the situation and see if there are solutions

- iv. Suggestion from the council: Put a banner above Gate D (which is rarely used for boarding trains) saying “Station entrance” and open the doors. If a clear entrance is provided in this area, the crowd will likely use that option instead of entering through Gate C – herd mentality is playing a role.
 - v. This problem will hopefully be resolved by the upcoming Union Station renovations (presented at the July 2016 meeting)
 - 1. David Zaidain (Senior Infrastructure Planning Manager, Amtrak) will provide an update at an upcoming meeting (probably March or April), likely including final or near-final plans
 - 2. Construction will start in the October/November timeframe, and will last roughly 18 months
 - f. There is a bug with the LED signs on some trains, with the message saying “BUSTRAIN next stop...”
 - i. Possibly a variable that is not being set properly?
 - g. Harpers Ferry
 - i. New shelter is nice, but there is no light
 - ii. Several passengers have already tripped on a step there
- X. New business
 - a. Brunswick Line – there have been several big delays lately
 - b. MARC Tracker
 - i. Funding to make improvements was cut
 - ii. Working on a solution to get the new (MARC IV) cabs working with the current system
 - 1. MARC is meeting with vendors next Tuesday to discuss this issue
 - c. Last week Brunswick train 891 (3:45 departure to Frederick) was mis-labeled on the departure board
 - i. The train was at the far north end of one platform, while passengers were told it was at the far north end of a different platform
 - ii. About 3 minutes before departure, the error was discovered and passengers were notified
 - iii. 100-200 passengers had made it to the base of the correct platform when they saw the train leave with very few passengers
 - d. Boarding on the middle track
 - i. MARC does not announce boarding on the middle track before the train has arrived
 - ii. Several years ago a few dozen people were nearly run over by an Acela because they were standing on an active track
 - iii. Conductors are not necessarily informed that they will be boarding on the middle track
 - iv. Boarding on the middle track is not done lightly – it really complicates the operations of the railroad
 - e. On 11 January, Vice President Biden arrived at Union Station around 7:45, causing the station to be locked down, but train 610 departed before passengers were allowed back in the boarding area

- i. MARC response: Trains are supposed to wait when Biden or another VIP comes
- f. Rebooting locomotives – how often does this happen? (It happened on 445 on 11 January just north of New Carrollton)
 - i. HHP-8 locomotives (electric) are not very reliable – currently 15 years old, have never been overhauled
 - ii. MARC has 6 HHP-8s, and they are starting a reliability improvement program
 - 1. The first locomotive is going through this upgrade now, and will be back in service this summer

XI. Meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm

Upcoming meetings (all Thursdays, 4:30-6:00pm)

- 16 February 2017
- 16 March 2017
- 20 April 2017

Reminder: Email rail car or station defects to Donna Walsh (dwalsh@mta.maryland.gov)

Attendance

'X' = present in the room

'P' = present by phone

MRAC		Amtrak		CSX	
Cheryl Bates-Harris		Howard Carter		Joe Lisska	X
June Brandt	P	Mike Tierney	X	Craig Wietscher	X
James Burrows-McElwain	X				
Steve Chan	X	Bombardier		MTA	
Joe Conny	X	Amika Anderson	X	Natiya Bennet	X
Charles Enders	P	Jeff Gaffney	X	David Johnson	X
Christopher Field		Katherine Read	X	Erich Kolig	
Aviva Glaser		Matthew Sturgeon	X	Dean DelPeschio	X
LaToya R. Griffin	P			Ross Turlington	
DeMyra Harvey		Guests		Donna Walsh	X
Jeff Jordan		Vince Hodge	X	Pat Keller	
Kelly Kopeikin	X	John Morris	X		
Brian Love	X	Miriam Schoenbaum	X		
Dan Sutherland-Weiser	X				
Jaime Streeter Wilson	X				
Matthew Wingerter	P				